

TESTIMONY OF JIM LOHR
CARPENTERS LABOR MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
RAISED BILL 412 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ENFORCEMENT OF CERTAIN OCCUPATIONAL
LICENSING STATUTES

Members of the General Law Committee. My name is Jim Lohr, and I am the Deputy Director of the Carpenter's Labor-Management Program, a coalition of approximately 2,000 signatory contractors and more than 20,000 union carpenters throughout New England.

Today, I am here to testify against Raised Bill 412, An Act Concerning the Enforcement of Certain Occupational Licensing Statutes.

First, I want to acknowledge Melissa Sheffy of Network Interiors who did a superb job organizing the various factions of the Connecticut construction industry to discuss the problems of enforcement. She is a tireless advocate for improving the construction industry, and I want to personally thank her for her strong leadership on this important issue.

From the beginning of the coalition meetings, there was unanimous support for the idea of additional investigators as a way to improve enforcement of existing licensing laws. Unfortunately, when the bill finally emerged late last week there was no mention of additional investigators for enforcement—the one issue where there was 100 percent industry support. Instead there was a variety of changes which, as drafted, could be detrimental for not only the unlicensed trades but the construction industry in general.

The bill will increase the authority of the boards, which could add to confusion between the agency and the boards, create a cumbersome stopwork order, and it is likely that the number of jurisdictional disputes between the license and unlicensed trades will increase.

I understand that people are working behind the scenes on substitute language to try to address some of these concerns. That is encouraging.

What isn't encouraging is that after the bill was introduced last week, I reached out to my colleagues in Massachusetts. They indicated that since the boards have expanded authority in Massachusetts, there has been a marked increase in jurisdictional disputes to the point where there is pending litigation between the state's largest contractor association and one of the Massachusetts' boards.

Unfortunately, licensing has become one more weapon for a small number of licensed crafts to claim work in jurisdictional disputes with unlicensed crafts. The last thing we need to do in Connecticut is create chaos in the Connecticut construction industry by encouraging more jurisdictional disputes, which would likely be the unintended consequence of this bill as written.

Again, we recognize the efforts of Melissa Sheffy and others in the coalition to address the problem of leveling the playing field but, unfortunately, we have to oppose this bill as written. And our sincere hope is that the committee will support the original goal of the industry coalition-- to beef up DCP enforcement of existing laws—which is good for everyone in the industry.